PugetSoundPartnership
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Salmon Recovery Plan Implementation
Agenda Item #03

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Proposed Action: Leadership Council Direction

Introduction

The Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Plan was developed by local communities, in their watersheds, through a multi-year stakeholder process that resulted in strong community-based support for the Recovery Plan. The Recovery Plan contains an extensive, detailed, and specific list of actions, based on rigorous science. The Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Council believes that implementation of the Recovery Plan must be accelerated. This will require, among other things, more effective actions to protect existing habitat, increased capital budget funding to implement each watershed plan, and increased support for the capacity of watersheds to manage recovery plan implementation.

This paper briefly describes the statutory role of the Partnership in salmon recovery and then summarizes some of the work within the watersheds. Following the watershed-specific discussion, background is included on salmon recovery planning, as well as time and cost estimates for salmon recovery, and a financial update.

Puget Sound Partnership Role

The Puget Sound Partnership Act, ESSB 5372 Section 49(3), RCW 77.85.090(3) provides that as of January 1, 2008, the Leadership Council shall serve as the regional salmon recovery organization for Puget Sound salmon species, except Hood Canal Summer Chum. The Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Council and watersheds provide important input to the Partnership regarding salmon recovery.

Near-term priority actions for each watershed

The watershed groups are the cornerstone of Puget Sound salmon recovery. Each watershed plays a different role in the Puget Sound ecosystem. Accordingly, each watershed chapter plan contains a unique sequence of actions and unique long-term and short-term priorities. Recently, Partnership staff invited each watershed to name a few of the things it is working on. The descriptions below are illustrative of the work in each watershed in accordance with its recovery plan chapter but are by no means comprehensive. The intent is to indicate some of the variations in watershed work plans for this year.

- **Nooksack Watershed**
  - South Fork spring Chinook conservation supplementation program (captive brood stock program).
  - Implement highest priority instream restoration projects in the North and South Forks (i.e., lower South Fork active channel logjams and lower North Fork reach stable side channel restoration).
  - Monitoring to support adaptive management.

- **Skagit Watershed**
  - Protect existing habitat across the Skagit Watershed.
  - Restore the habitat and river processes within the middle-Skagit.
  - Restore the habitat and estuarine process of the Skagit Delta.

- **Stillaguamish Watershed**
  - Reduce the impact of peak flows and associated sediment entering the river on the egg to fry survival by reducing the amount of forest land in the upper watershed that is an immature state.
  - Continue to fund and implement a captive brood stock program in both the South and North Fork Stillaguamish until the habitat is restored enough to sustain harvestable numbers of fish.
  - Protect the best remaining fish habitat across the basin.
  - Restore, protect, and acquire land as possible for the floodplain, estuary, and nearshore.

- **Snohomish Watershed**
  - Restore at least 600 acres within the Snohomish estuary, including breaching and/or setting back dikes, restoring riparian areas and edge habitat, and improving fish passage.
  - Refine and implement an adaptive management and monitoring program. This includes maintaining existing monitoring.
  - Provide targeted and empowering education and outreach.

- **Lake Washington/Cedar/Sammamish Watershed**
  - Advance low-impact development outreach and education.
  - Identify stable funding to sustain habitat protection and restoration efforts.
  - Advance monitoring, including habitat status and trends, tracking “fish in, fish out,” and determining how to address concern that monitoring competes with capital project implementation.
  - Outreach and education to increase awareness and support for salmon recovery.

- **Green/Duwamish Watershed**
  - Implement habitat capital and programmatic projects and reporting results.
  - Public education and involvement; stewardship; Lead Entity coordination.
  - Fund raising for project implementation.

- Manage an interlocal agreement among 17 local governments for providing watershed coordination services across WRIA 9.

- **Puyallup/White and Chambers/Clover Creek Watersheds**
  - Implement capacity grant allocation, focusing on marketing recovery goals and efforts to project sponsors and landowners, as well as a media campaign to raise awareness and promote work.
  - Advance H-integration with collaborative work group, including representatives from Pierce County, WDFW, Puyallup Tribe, and Muckleshoot Tribe.
  - Conduct project development to advance robust projects for funding.

- **Nisqually Watershed**
  - Implement identified high priority restoration and protection projects.
  - Finish adaptive management plan.
  - Expand watershed sustainability, including focus on health of watershed ecosystem, community, and economy.
  - Advance hatchery reform, including initiating use of a seasonal weir to remove hatchery strays during Chinook runs.

- **South Sound Watersheds**
  - Acquire land for habitat protection.
  - Conduct targeted nearshore landowner outreach, emphasizing need to protect and restore habitat.
  - Continue developing the collaborative organizational structure of the South Sound region.

- **West Sound Watersheds**
  - Continue advancing formal organization of West Sound with creation of West Sound Watershed Council.
  - Determine how to articulate integration of efforts to protect and restore habitats benefiting multiple species with nearshore protection and restoration efforts focused on Chinook recovery.

- **Island County Watershed**
  - Acquisition for protection. Developing a protection plan to assess protection and restoration opportunities and priorities on the landscape/watershed scale.
  - Implement restoration projects.
  - Fill data gaps by integrating assessment results into project ranking criteria.

- **San Juan County Watershed**
  - Protect priority habitat across the San Juan Islands.
  - Two priority habitat protection actions are: 1) ensure that the Critical Areas Ordinance is updated in a manner that supports salmon recovery and protection of habitat; and 2) complete and implement the results of the San Juan Initiative which is currently showing that the amount of impact on the nearshore habitat is much greater than what has been documented.

- Completion of the Big Picture assessment project to understand what fish are where and when in order to direct restoration and acquisition projects to the priority habitats.

➢ **Hood Canal**
- Implement near term actions identified in the Skokomish Chinook Salmon Recovery Plan, including creating ecological conditions that would allow for preserving and enhancing the existing Chinook stock and as well as restoring the extirpated spring Chinook stock.
- The Hood Canal Coordinating Council (HCCC) and its partners will continue to implement identified high priority restoration and conservation projects that restore ecosystem processes, while fine-tuning the next generation of projects through robust assessment and feasibility studies.
- We are continuing to work with our governments to implement and measure performance of programmatic actions (i.e. land use, regulatory programs, etc.) committed to in the HCCC Summer Chum Salmon Recovery Plan.

➢ **North Olympic Peninsula: Elwha and Dungeness Watersheds**
- In the Elwha, restoration of habitat will be needed before and after dam removal scheduled for 2012. In the near-term, restoration includes floodplain habitat restoration and removal of fish passage barriers.
- In the Dungeness, river function restoration, including the estuary and floodplain, is a priority through dike set-back, channel re-meandering, and engineered log jam placement.
- In the nearshore along the Strait of Juan de Fuca, priority actions include protection and restoration of estuaries and the shoreline.

Salmon Recovery Background

In 1994, several petitions were filed with NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service ("NMFS") to list West Coast Salmon and Steelhead as threatened[1] or endangered under the Endangered Species Act. Even prior to formal listing, King, Pierce, and Snohomish counties united through a tri-county salmon recovery effort. Speaking on behalf of the tri-county effort, King County Executive Ron Sims said, "Our salmon and the waters they live in don't recognize jurisdictional boundaries, and neither can we. We must work together to create a plan that will work best for the salmon and people of our region."

[1] The term "threatened species" means any species likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future. The term "endangered species" basically means any species in danger of extinction. In practice, there is little significant distinction between the federal protections for species listed as "threatened" and species listed as "endangered."

❖ Shared Strategy is Formed

NMFS listed Puget Sound Chinook as a "threatened" species in 1999.[2] Shortly thereafter, building on the tri-county effort, a group of over 150 representatives of federal, state, tribal and local governments and salmon recovery organizations came together to shape a "Shared Strategy" for salmon recovery. Headed by Bill Ruckelshaus, Bill Frank, Jr., and other top Puget Sound leaders, Shared Strategy for Puget Sound Salmon Recovery was formed to "develop a recovery plan for the Puget Sound region that meets the needs of fish and people."

❖ Recovery Planning

Shared Strategy conducted recovery planning within watershed groups that represented diverse communities. For administrative and water resource planning purposes, the Washington Department of Ecology divides the State into Watershed Resource Inventory Areas ("WRIAs") based on watershed/topographic boundaries rather than political units. Most salmon recovery groups are roughly organized along these lines as well.

The recovery planning process was developed in consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service, the State of Washington, Puget Sound Tribes, local governments, watersheds, and marine resources groups. A group of fisheries scientists, the Puget Sound Technical Recovery Team ("PSTRT"), prepared guidelines for watershed groups outlining the technical information required to determine population recovery targets. Local watershed planning groups joined this regional effort. Each of the fourteen watersheds prepared recovery plan chapters identifying the threats to salmon survival and specifying restoration and protection strategies and actions addressing the factors causing the decline of the fish. The watersheds, based on direction from the PSTRT, developed working scientific hypotheses to relate watershed conditions to their effects on the fish, and prepared detailed recovery work plans with timelines and costs. Following an extensive technical and policy review process, the watersheds revised their chapters.

In addition, Shared Strategy identified cross-watershed issues that will need to be addressed by the Partnership, including water quality and water quantity, habitat protection measures and tools, nearshore-marine protection and restoration strategies, a financing strategy, and implementation functions, such as monitoring and adaptive management.

The Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Plan is exceptionally detailed. The plan includes a regional plan (Volume I), its 14 watershed chapters and one regional nearshore chapter (Volume II) and appendixes. It was submitted to NMFS for adoption on June 30, 2005.

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[2] Hood Canal Summer Chum and Puget Sound Bull Trout were also listed as threatened in 1999. In May 2007, Puget Sound steelhead were listed as threatened.

❖ Federal Approval of the Recovery Plan

NOAA Fisheries approved the plan, with supplemental conditions, on January 19, 2007, stressing the following:

- The necessity to protect existing functioning habitat;
- The substantial uncertainty regarding the ability of existing land use protection programs to protect essential existing habitat;
- The significance of specifically identified natal and pocket estuaries;
- The importance of strategies and actions that protect, preserve options for, and restore habitat functions in lower river areas, including deltas, estuaries, side channels, and floodplains; and
- The need for an assessment of the cumulative effects of all hatchery production and stressed the need for more specificity for hatchery programs in each watershed to function in a manner that is integrated with habitat capacity and harvest objectives.

NOAA Fisheries encouraged the Department of Ecology to act swiftly to protect instream flows and implement flow restoration programs. It pledged to work with the co-managers to evaluate harvest management plans in light of the need for salmon recovery.
Finally, NOAA Fisheries offered to support development and implementation of an adaptive management and monitoring program.

Time and Cost Estimates

Recovery will take several decades, or up to 50 to 100 years. For the first ten years of plan implementation the total cost is estimated at $120 million in capital costs per year. Prior to 2007, annual federal, state, and local capital budget funding for salmon recovery was approximately $60,000,000. Thus, the cost estimate for salmon recovery over the next decade requires $60,000,000 in new funding each year. This includes the specific recovery actions in the watershed plans, as well as programs that span multiple watersheds, including hatchery improvements, nearshore and marine habitat protection and restoration, and incentive programs for habitat restoration and conservation on farm and forest lands. This does not include the cost of operating budget for watershed, local, state, federal, and tribal programs. There is a great need for additional funds to increase watershed capacity to implement the plan.

The financing plan for salmon recovery relies heavily on redirecting environmental mitigation dollars off-site to fund salmon and other watershed recovery capital projects. Of the $60,000,000 in new costs for salmon recovery, the recovery finance plan projected that $35,000,000 each year will be available from re-directed mitigation funding. This would be an enormous shift in the way the environmental impacts of public infrastructure and private development projects are mitigated. It is probably too ambitious for the foreseeable future. Nonetheless, progress towards optimizing the use of environmental mitigation funds is essential to both Sound and salmon recovery.

Funding Update

In the 2007 legislative session, capitalizing on the momentum to create the Puget Sound Partnership, $42,000,000 was appropriated for the Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration ("PSAR") fund, in addition to the Puget Sound's allocation from the Salmon Recovery Funding Board. As with all SRFB-funded projects for Puget Sound, the PSAR funds are being invested in projects recommended by watersheds and approved by the Puget Sound Technical Recovery Team, the Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Council, the SRFB Review Panel, and the SRFB. In all, including local matches, over $100,000,000 in SRFB capital projects were funded for Puget Sound salmon recovery in 2007. Unfortunately, the SRFB Puget Sound allocation for 2008 is below $8,500,000, so even with local matches, it is expected that this year the SRFB capital projects for Puget Sound Recovery will amount to less than $16,000,000. Although additional state investments are being made in hatchery retrofits, conservation incentive programs, and through other state grant programs, we are nowhere near averaging $120,000,000 per year, as the plan requires.

Conclusion

Salmon recovery in Puget Sound can be greatly advanced by the Partnership. In particular, the Partnership is well positioned to accelerate programs to protect existing habitat functions, to improve water quality, to enhance fresh water flows where needed, and to otherwise address issues identified by NOAA Fisheries as it approved the Recovery Plan. In addition, scientific work that underlies the Salmon Recovery Plan, including the individual chapters, is now being used in the work to synthesize and summarize our understanding about the status of and threats to Puget Sound as a whole and in each action area. Each watershed has completed a three-year work plan that has been reviewed by local and regional scientists. The actions in these three-year work plans are poised to provide a foundation for protection and restoration actions that will have many benefits for the Sound as a whole.

The Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Plan embodies a collaborative, watershed-based approach. Salmon recovery watershed work is the cornerstone of broader Sound efforts. Watershed groups contribute creativity, knowledge, and motivation to implementing lasting solutions to the complex challenges facing salmon and the Sound. Salmon recovery and Sound recovery must go hand in hand.